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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 2nd MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 7 February 1995, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. KAMAL (Pakistan)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

ELECTION OF THE BUREAU (continued)

The PRESIDENT said that, following consultations, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States and the Group of African States had decided to nominate Mr. Tejera-París (Venezuela) and Mr. Gervais (Côte d'Ivoire), respectively, for two of the posts of Vice-President of the Council for 1995.

Mr. Tejera-París (Venezuela) and Mr. Gervais (Côte d'Ivoire) were elected Vice-Presidents by acclamation.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS (E/1995/2 and Add.1)

The PRESIDENT informed the Council that the Secretariat had received a letter from the Permanent Representative of Australia requesting that a new item on the joint and co-sponsored programme on HIV/AIDS should be included on the agenda of the organizational session. Specifically, the Council was requested to undertake preliminary consideration of the draft report of the Committee of Co-sponsoring Organizations of the joint and co-sponsored programme.

He took it that the Council wished to approve its provisional agenda as contained in document E/1995/2 and Add.1, and to include a new item entitled "Joint and Co-sponsored Programme on HIV/AIDS", as proposed by Australia.

It was so decided.

BASIC PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE COUNCIL (E/1995/1 and Add.1)

The PRESIDENT invited members to propose themes for the high-level segment of the Council's substantive session of 1995. In that regard, he drew attention to paragraphs 15 to 18 of document E/1995/1.

Mr. MABILANGAN (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, proposed that the Council should devote its high-level segment to a discussion of the development of Africa in all its aspects, including the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and the Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development, 1986-1990. The high-level segment should be characterized by informal dialogue, in addition to formal statements by ministers.

Mr. DELACROIX (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union, endorsed the proposal of the Group of 77. The major portion of the high-level segment should be devoted to a genuine dialogue on the subject of African development. Links should also be forged between the high-level segment and the informal exchange of views with the multilateral financial institutions.

Mr. LOZANO (Mexico) said that his delegation placed great importance on the high-level segment, which ideally should result in specific recommendations for action. His delegation understood and shared the concern for Africa, which deserved the attention of the international community, but believed that international drug control also deserved careful analysis and consideration. General Assembly resolutions 48/12 and 49/168 had requested the Council to consider that topic and to report to the General Assembly. If the high-level segment must concentrate on only one theme, then the Council, at its organizational session, should give some reply to the General Assembly regarding its plans for addressing the drug problem.

Mr. MAKOETJE (Observer for Lesotho) said that the Group of African States fully supported the proposal of the Group of 77 and China. The proposed theme was very timely. A detailed list of sub-topics to be considered under that theme should be drawn up. A recommendation had been made that two themes could be considered, but given the importance of African development and the time available, concentrating on one theme would make for a more detailed discussion and exchange of views.

Mr. TEJERA-PARIS (Venezuela) said that, although the proposed theme was very important, his delegation would prefer to see general themes that affected all members of the international community, such as international drug control or multilateral aid, discussed during the high-level segment, rather than concentrating only on one region or continent.

Mr. HORIGUCHI (Japan) said that his delegation supported the proposal to consider the development of Africa, given the importance and magnitude of the issues involved. It also agreed that the high-level segment should focus on one theme.

Ms. YANG Yanyi (China) said that determining how to assist Africa in realizing its social and economic development in the prevailing circumstances, was truly a matter of international concern. Her delegation hoped that, through

formal statements and dialogue, international cooperation for African development would be achieved.

Mr. NKOUNKOU (Congo) said that his delegation firmly supported the proposal of the Group of 77 and appreciated the support of the European Union and Japan. It could not agree to the proposal to consider two themes, as the depth and detail of the discussions would be affected. The international community had focused on a particular region or group of countries, such as small island developing States, on numerous other occasions.

Mr. OJIMBA (Nigeria) said that the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa had been before the international community for some time, yet no action had been taken, and the opportunity for dialogue at the highest level should be seized. Africa was said to be the weakest link in the chain of global development. Other major issues, such as international drug control, were not being ignored, but in the context of recent discussions of An Agenda for Development, it was time for Africa to receive the sustained attention of the international community.

Ms. JACOBSEN (Norway) said that her delegation supported the proposal that African development should be the single theme of the high-level segment. She suggested that it should incorporate social issues beyond the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, such as poverty alleviation. Her delegation also supported proposals to structure the high-level segment to allow as much dialogue as possible, as well as to maintain the informal exchanges of view between the high-level segment and representatives of multilateral financial institutions, within the broader context of development in Africa.

Mr. AWAAD (Egypt) supported the proposal of the African Group and the Group of 77 and China. The entire international community faced the challenge of halting the economic deterioration occurring in Africa. His delegation hoped that the review of the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s would be the sole item to be taken up during the high-level segment, and that the Council's deliberations would contribute towards a productive mid-term review of the New Agenda by the General Assembly in 1996.

Mr. SENGWE (Zimbabwe) fully supported the proposal of the Group of 77 and China, especially in view of the fact that the 1990s were nearly half over

already and it was time for the international community to give its undivided attention to the problems that Africa was facing.

Mr. MABILANGAN (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, pointed out that the Group had taken a unanimous position on the question of the theme of the high-level segment. There was a clear need for special support for African development; his delegation agreed with that of Norway that African development was both an economic and social theme and required discussion on that broader level. The Group of 77 felt that the theme of African development was large enough to occupy two days' discussion. He recalled that the topic of narcotics had already been taken up in the Council's coordination segment in 1994.

Mr. MARRERO (United States of America) said that his delegation was open to having Africa as a theme for the high-level segment, but was also prepared to consider the possibility of having other themes. Informal discussions could be held if there was no consensus on the issue. However, he stressed the importance of going beyond the highly generalized treatment of topics that had characterized previous sessions. Ministers and agencies could be invited to address specific sub-topics and questions under the general theme, so as to sharpen the focus of the discussion.

Mr. GERVAIS (Côte d'Ivoire) said that during the high-level segment, the Council should not disperse its efforts on generalities. Africa should be dealt with specifically, and he therefore fully supported the proposals of the Group of 77 and China and of the African Group.

Mr. SYCHOU (Belarus) said that his delegation, too, supported the proposal that African development should be the theme of the high-level segment. It expected that the discussion of that theme would be comprehensive and would lead to practical solutions for the most important problems facing Africa.

The PRESIDENT said that while there was broad support for the proposal that African development should be the theme of the high-level segment, other themes had been suggested. In view of the importance of the high-level segment, he intended to hold further consultations with the aim of achieving a consensus on the matter.

Mr. AGGREY (Ghana) asked the President how he intended to conduct the informal consultations on the question of the theme of the high-level segment.

The PRESIDENT said that he intended first to hold a meeting of the Bureau, and then, if necessary, to hold an open-ended meeting so that the consultation process would be transparent. Given the importance of the question of African development, every effort should be made to decide the matter by consensus.

Mr. LOZANO (Mexico) wished to make it clear that Mexico had no objection to the theme of African development being considered in the high-level segment. However, another theme had been proposed. In view of the fact that most delegations favoured a single theme for the high-level segment, he asked how the Council intended to respond to the recommendation of the General Assembly that the drug problem might also be considered as a theme at that segment.

The PRESIDENT said that he, too, was concerned about the problem that arose when the General Assembly recommended two separate themes. The Council and the same Member States that had adopted those recommendations then requested in the Council that only one of them should be taken up. The problem would have to be resolved through consultations.

Themes for the coordination segment

The PRESIDENT said that informal consultations had led to the idea of devoting the coordination segment to the sole theme of "Coordinated follow-up by the United Nations system of the results of major international conferences organized by the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields".

Mr. MABILANGAN (Philippines) welcomed the proposed theme, which accorded well with the concerns of the Group of 77 and China. As the principal organ of the United Nations concerned with economic and social issues, the Council was required to coordinate the institutional mechanisms to be established at a series of major conferences in the months ahead. Coordinated follow-up of the results of those conferences was necessary to ensure that all the commitments undertaken at past and future conferences would be implemented.

Mr. DUGAN (United States of America) said that his delegation felt that the proposed theme was very timely. Follow-up was important in order to ensure that conferences produced tangible results and not just documents to gather dust on shelves. The coordination segment, like the high-level segment, must be as focused as possible; the themes that were selected must be carefully defined and invitations to participants must include a detailed description of

the themes and sub-themes and of specific questions which the Council wished to address.

Mr. DELACROIX (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that there had been no consensus during informal consultations that only one theme should be taken up at the coordination segment. The European Union could give favourable consideration to the proposed theme; it was appropriate to establish coherence in the sequence of major international conferences and a common approach to the roles of the various United Nations bodies. However, the title of the theme should also include the planning of future conferences; the words "coordinated follow-up" should be changed to "common framework", since it was not a question of establishing a new mechanism but of engaging in reflection within the context of the broader consideration of an agenda for development.

The other themes suggested by the European Union had been the question of a joint and co-sponsored programme on the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) and United Nations action on water: both were crucial concerns for the world. Although the Council had held consultations on a joint and co-sponsored programme on HIV/AIDS in 1992, those consultations had concentrated on the establishment of the programme and its legal framework and additional consultations would be needed to establish operational guidelines. The scourge of HIV/AIDS was universal; at the same time, consideration of that theme should not detract from the attention accorded to other diseases like malaria.

Mr. ISAKOV (Russian Federation) said that his delegation supported the proposed theme; since several major United Nations forums had been organized recently or were planned, there was a particular need for an effective mechanism to implement the important decisions taken by them. The consideration of the theme would be a major component of an agenda for development and would be a substantive input to the work of the ad hoc working group as envisaged in General Assembly resolution 49/126.

Mr. KOBAYASHI (Japan) said that his delegation supported the proposed theme; it was very important to develop and refine the framework for the follow-up to major conferences. His delegation would prefer to limit the scope of the theme to follow-up rather than future planning so as to avoid prejudging future world conferences.

Since the subject of a joint and co-sponsored programme on HIV/AIDS was still under consideration at the working level, it might not be possible to consider that subject in detail in the coordination segment.

Mr. HUDYMA (Ukraine) said that his delegation supported the proposed theme. It felt that one of the major shortcomings of the United Nations was that decisions taken in its forums were not always implemented, or were not implemented in the manner intended. His delegation agreed that the coordination segment should be directed towards solving specific problems.

Ms. YANG Yanyi (China) said that her delegation had no difficulty with the proposed theme. Since the consideration of that theme could be quite time-consuming, it might be best not to have other themes as well, although her delegation could be flexible.

She hoped that there would be enough time during the coordination segment to consider the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the agreed conclusions on coordination of the policies and activities of the specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations system related to science and technology for development.

Mr. RAHOUL (Observer for Algeria) said that his delegation supported the proposed theme. However, it had misgivings about the idea of using the follow-up mechanism for the planning of future conferences and felt that it should be left to delegations to suggest the convening of conferences when the need was felt.

During informal consultations it had been agreed that AIDS would not be discussed during the coordination segment; on the other hand, the Group of 77 had indicated that it would be prepared to consider a theme relating to water.

The PRESIDENT said that, on the question of future planning, Member States were sovereign entities and should be free to suggest at any stage that a summit conference should be held. He did not think that a follow-up mechanism could be used to make decisions about future conferences.

Mr. AWAAD (Egypt) said that his delegation supported the proposed theme because if there was no follow-up to major conferences, their recommendations and conclusions would have been made in vain. The theme was so vast that the selection of a single theme was fully justified. However, the theme should not include future planning.

Mr. FLORECIO (Brazil) said that he welcomed the proposed theme since it was essential to have a follow-up mechanism for major United Nations conferences. Such conferences were a vital part of the work of the Organization in various fields. The follow-up exercise could be useful for future conferences and as an input for an agenda for development. However, planning was a very different exercise, because States had a sovereign right to propose conferences and conferences could also result from spontaneous initiatives at different levels of society. The Council should therefore concentrate on follow-up, which in itself was a complex subject.

Ms. JACOBSEN (Norway) said that her delegation supported the proposed theme because it felt that it was crucial to consider all the recommendations of international summit meetings and conferences and the follow-up required at the national and international levels and among the different partners of the United Nations system. Before proposing new conferences and summit meetings it was worth considering what would be required of the partners in the system. The follow-up exercise could be borne in mind for future planning, and would be a very important input for the ad hoc working group on the agenda for development. The theme would be very time-consuming and therefore there would be no need for other topics.

The Council also needed to consider the follow-up of its own recommendations and should determine whether some of its recommendations on coordination could be transferred to the general segment.

The PRESIDENT recalled that the Council had agreed to use the word "framework" rather than "follow-up" so as to provide for flexibility and focus more on the idea of follow-up than on a mechanism for follow-up.

Mr. DELACROIX (France) said that there had been no formal agreement to have only one theme in the coordination segment (although the Group of 77 had expressed reservations about one of the proposed themes). Of course, Member States had a sovereign right to choose themes and propose the convening of conferences. However, it would be a pity not to draw lessons from difficulties encountered in the follow-up to major conferences. A more general title of the theme would make it possible to incorporate that approach.

The PRESIDENT said that it was his understanding that the subject of AIDS would be taken up in the general segment anyway.

There seemed to be wide support for the idea of a single theme for the coordination segment, although at least one delegation felt that the title should refer to a "common framework" rather than "coordinated follow-up". With the agreement of the Council, he would continue consultations on that subject.

Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation segment

The PRESIDENT recalled that during informal consultations there had been a fairly strong division of opinion between the European Union and the Group of 77 and it was generally felt that the two groups should hold informal consultations to seek an agreed position. The Council would therefore revert to the matter after those consultations were held.

Mr. GUERRERO (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that his delegation had great confidence in the experience and judgement of the executive secretaries of the regional commissions, who knew best what was in the interest of their respective regions. The Group of 77 and China were in favour of a discussion of South-South cooperation, which was an increasingly important issue, but would also welcome discussion of social development; also, interregional consultations and cooperation were desirable regarding the issue of international migration.

Mr. DELACROIX (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union, noted with interest the subjects which had been proposed. His delegation needed time, however, to consider its choice.

COMMITTEE FOR DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

The PRESIDENT recalled that, during informal consultations, the Group of 77 had inquired as to the rationale for the proposal to replace the Committee for Development Planning by a panel of experts. It had been felt that the status quo should be maintained until the reasons for a change became clear.

Mr. GUERRERO (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that for the time being the status quo was indeed preferable, and the Committee for Development Planning should be reactivated.

Mr. RAMOUL (Observer for Algeria) supported the position expressed by the representative of the Philippines, and recalled that, during the informal consultations, the proposal to maintain the status quo had not been opposed. It had also been generally agreed that the Committee for Development Planning should be willing to function in a flexible way; it should adopt appropriate

working methods, enabling it to fulfil its task in the most effective possible way.

Mr. DUGAN (United States of America) wondered what purpose the Committee for Development Planning served, since it rarely met and had proven to be an expensive, bureaucratic device. Criteria for the designation of least developed countries could easily be produced by the expert working group of the Commission on Social Development. He requested information on how often the Committee had met, what its output had been over the years, and what costs had been associated with it, so that the Economic and Social Council could take a practical, business-like decision regarding the future of the Committee.

Mr. DELACROIX (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that his delegation felt that the proposed reform would make the Committee for Development Planning more effective and enable it to make better use of its resources. If the status quo were to be maintained, the Committee would need to show increased flexibility in its working methods and consistency in the issues it dealt with. Consideration should also be given to the possibility of modifying the profile of the experts on the Committee so that they would be better able to deal with the many different components of development for which the Committee was responsible. One task that should be maintained was the periodic review of the list of least developed countries.

Mr. RAMOUL (Observer for Algeria) said it was surprising that certain delegations were suggesting that the Committee for Development Planning should cease to exist. He was not aware that the Secretariat had ever reported any inefficiency or waste on the part of the Committee; he would welcome any real evidence to support the proposed reform.

Mr. AWAAD (Egypt) supported the position of the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The criticisms of the effectiveness of the Committee for Development Planning did not justify its abolition. It would be more appropriate to consider ways of enabling it to work effectively and to fulfil its role, which was very important to the developing, and especially the least developed, countries. He welcomed the willingness of the representative of France, speaking on behalf of the European Union, to consider maintaining the status quo.

The PRESIDENT said that further consultations would be held on that item.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.